

**STANDARDS FOR APPROVAL
OF
FAMILY FOSTER HOMES**

**STATE OF ARKANSAS
ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
DIVISION OF CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES
FOSTER CARE SERVICES
P. O. BOX 1437 (SLOT S570)
LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS 72203**

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1.0 **Definition**

A family foster home is a private residence of one (1) or more family members that receives from a child welfare agency any minor child who is unattended by a parent or guardian in order to provide care, training, education, custody or supervision on a twenty-four (24) hour basis, not to include adoptive homes. There must be no more than five children physically in the home including their own children. There must be no more than two children under the age of two years and no more than three children under the age of six. There must be no more than three foster children. Certain exceptions can be made to keep sibling groups together (see Section 6.0, Item #7, "Maximum Capacity of Foster Children").

2.0 **Authority**

Standards for approving and supervising a family foster home are promulgated under the authority of Arkansas Code Annotated 20-76-201 and 20-76-202.

3.0 **Statement of Policy and Purpose**

It is the policy of the Division to promote and encourage the provision of safe and adequate foster care designed to meet all the needs of children when the child's natural family is unable to provide adequate care. Therefore, the goal of the Division's family foster home program is to provide an approved family foster home for every foster child under supervision of the Division, as follows: The family foster home placement should be the least restrictive, most family-like setting consistent with the foster child's special needs. It should be within close proximity to the child's parent/legal guardian, i.e., within fifty miles of the parental home.

The family foster home makes it possible for children who cannot remain with their own birth/legal parents or guardians to live with a family and to have the experiences associated with normal family life. These experiences should include opportunities for physical and emotional development and socialization. Placement of a child in a family foster home is considered to be a temporary situation until a permanent plan can be developed and implemented for the foster child. Foster parenting is not intended to be a permanent solution to the child's placement needs. Unless specified otherwise, the presumption is that the child's goal is to be returned to the parents. Persons wanting to adopt a child should not regard foster parenting as an alternative to adoption.

4.0 **Types of Family Foster Homes**

There are four types of family foster homes which are approved and supervised according to established standards. These homes are emergency, planned-term, respite and specialized.

A. **Emergency Family Foster Homes**

Emergency homes are homes in which the family foster parents agree to provide temporary, short-term care for any child who is referred by the child-placing agency in an emergency situation. The same standards that apply for regular family foster homes also apply for these homes. Emergency referrals include children placed in emergency custody of the child-placing agency by the courts, children from whom the child-placing agency is searching for a suitable regular family foster home, and children who must be removed from a regular family foster home before another suitable family foster home is located.

Family foster parents in an emergency family foster home would be expected to accept any child referred by the child-placing agency at any hour of the day or night. The preferences according to age, sex, or condition of children shall be identified prior to approval of the home as an emergency foster home. Placement of a child would be of short duration. This would be pending outcome of a court hearing or location of a suitable regular family foster home or relative. Failure of the emergency family foster home to abide by the terms of their agreement with the Division may result in the home being closed as an Emergency Family Foster Home. Such closed homes will no longer receive the higher rate emergency homes receive.

B. **Planned-term (Regular) Family Foster Homes**

Planned-term family foster homes are homes in which the family foster parents agree to provide 24 hour per day care for a particular foster child. There will be an agreement between the child-placing agency and the family foster parents that the family can care for that child as a substitute family until such a time as a permanent plan can be developed and implemented for that child. The family foster parents will be given pertinent information about the foster child. This included reasons for placement, circumstances for removal from the parent's home, where siblings are placed, a copy of the case plan and visitation plan. They will be kept informed concerning plans for the child's future. In many instances it will be appropriate for family foster parents to reach out to the birth/legal parents. However, this outreach will be supervised by members of the reunification services team.

Family members and the physical characteristics of the home must be evaluated to determine special qualifications of the prospective foster family. Evaluation is considered with regard to special training and expertise, experience, and preference as to the numbers, ages, sex and characteristics of children who may be placed in their home.

C. **Respite Family Foster Homes**

In certain situations, placement arrangements are needed for a foster child to stay overnight. A weekend, with a family or individual may be needed to provide family foster parents a brief time-out from the stress of foster parenting. Birth/legal parents in crisis may also need a brief time-out from parenting a child. The type of family foster homes used in these cases is called respite family foster homes. It is not the same as the "Visiting Resource" home. That type of home is recruited and approved by residential facilities or other institutional settings. They are used for the purpose of allowing foster children residing in their facilities an opportunity to experience a family setting, including an overnight stay at a friend's home or the home of a relative of the foster family. Respite family foster homes shall meet all standards and requirements for a regular family foster home.

D. **Specialized Family Foster Homes**

These are homes in which both parents have received training in addition to pre-service family foster parent training. They have been approved to accept children whose physical, mental, emotional, and/or social handicapping conditions are of such degree that only those with special training can provide needed services. In some instances, it may be appropriate for specialized family foster parents to work with

birth/legal parent(s). They can help them learn to deal with the child's special needs. Specialized Family Foster Homes receive a special service fee in addition to regular board payments.

E. **Kinship Foster Homes**

Kinship foster homes are homes in which adult relatives within the first, second, or third degree of kin to the parent or stepparent are recruited by the Family Service Worker to provide 24 hours per day care for children who are related through blood or marriage. These homes must meet all of the minimum licensing requirements for a family foster home. Relatives who are approved for placement of children in their home may choose to be a kinship foster home or a regular foster home. Kinship foster homes will be approved only for placement of relative children. If the relatives choose to be a regular foster home, they will have the responsibility of caring for relative and non-relative foster children.

There will be no distinction in licensing requirements between kinship foster homes and all other approved foster homes in Arkansas. A waiver on a non-safety standard can be granted on a case-by-case basis and is subject to approval by the Child Welfare Agency Review Board. The approval of a kinship foster home can be expedited by providing one-on-one pre-service training.

Once permanency is achieved for the relative children placed in a kinship family foster home, relatives may choose to become a regular family foster home if they remain in compliance with licensing standards. This will be a decision made by both the relatives and DCFS based on the best interest of the relative children.

Kinship foster homes are to receive an approval letter and certificate (CFS-481) identifying approval as a kinship foster family. A new approval letter should be issued if the family becomes a regular foster home.

5.0 **Selection**

The Division is responsible for selecting a suitable family foster home for each child placed in its care. The home must meet family foster home standards and the individual child's needs for the duration of placement. The preferences of the family foster parents in regard to selection of foster children for that home must be strictly adhered to. In order to have a suitable family foster home for each foster child, to minimize the risks involved in placement of a foster child away from his own family, and to assure that the foster child will not be moved from foster home to foster home, it is necessary to select families on the basis of careful assessment and evaluation. At least one parent in the foster home shall be able to communicate effectively in the language of the child. **However, this does not apply to foster parents for infants or short term emergency placement.** It is necessary to have a sufficient number and variety of homes available and to improve the skills of the family foster parents through training and supervision. Family foster parents are required to have a minimum of thirty (30) hours of pre-service training. **The family foster parent must complete CPR and First Aid training and receive certification in both areas prior to approval to become a foster parent. No child placements can be made in the foster home until the foster parent(s) has obtained CPR and First Aid certification.** Family foster parent applicants are encouraged by the Division to undergo a self-assessment intended to eliminate applications from families that cannot give the physical and emotional care necessary for healthy nurturing of children.

6.0 Family Foster Home Standards

Standards for family foster homes are set to assure good care and growth-producing living experiences in a safe home environment for every foster child under supervision of the child placing agency. These written standards are used to determine the suitability of applicants to be family foster parents.

Standards are categorized as Character, Suitability and Qualifications for the Family Members and Physical Standards for the home. Standards are to be met by the family for the duration of their service as a family foster home.

A. Character, Suitability and Qualifications for the Family Members

1. **Joint Application:** In a two-parent home, the husband and wife shall be joint applicants. Each shall actively participate in the foster home assessment. This joint family commitment shall be reevaluated annually.
2. **Personal characteristics:** Family foster parents must have the personal characteristics which enable them to assume the responsibility of caring for foster children. No person may serve as a foster parent if any adult member of that person's household is a homosexual. "Homosexual", for purposes of this rule, shall mean any person who voluntarily and knowingly engages in or submits to any sexual contact involving the genitals of one person and the mouth or anus of another person of the same gender, and who has engaged in such activity after the foster home is approved or at a point in time that is reasonably close in time to the filing of the application to be a foster parent. These personal characteristics include:
 - a. The capacity to love and care for children and respond to children's needs;
 - b. The capacity and willingness to give love, affection, and care to a child without expecting the child to return this love and affection;
 - c. The willingness to allow for socialization of the foster child with his/her peers;
 - d. Flexibility in their expectations, attitudes, and behavior in relation to meeting the needs of children;
 - e. Ethical standards and values which are conducive to the well-being of children;
 - f. The ability to accept a foster child's background without passing moral judgment on the child or the child's birth/legal family;
 - g. The ability to accept a foster child's relationship with his or her birth/legal family;
 - h. The ability and willingness to accept, understand, and utilize training, guidance and supervision from the child-placing agency or other professional people in order to meet the needs of foster children and their families of origin;
 - i. Emotional stability, including a satisfactory method of handling angry feelings;
 - j. Satisfactory and stable adult relationships, which include not only a satisfactory and meaningful marital relationship, but also supportive relationships with several relatives and/or friends;
 - k. The ability to function adequately in their chosen life style; i.e., ability to enjoy and accept the responsibility of their job, their family life, their friends, and their personal lives;
 - l. An acceptance of their own childhood experiences. An absence of any qualities which indicate that the family foster parent could abuse children;

- m. The capacity to absorb the presence of a foster child without undue disruption to their own family life. The ability to cope with the departure of the foster child; and
 - n. The maturity to exercise good judgment and appropriate use of authority, along with the youthful qualities of vitality and flexibility which are necessary to care for children.
3. **Age:** Applicants shall be age 21 or over. Applicants shall not be approved as a family foster home if one or both spouses are less than age 21. The family foster home shall undergo a "second party review," if one or both applicants are age 65 or over or when one or both spouses of a currently opened family foster home reaches age 65. This will be conducted by the Foster Care Unit, Central Office. A request for a "second party review" shall contain specific information and documentation. This will be used to assess each family foster parent's age and how it will affect his/her ability to care for a specific foster child.
4. **Health:** A physical examination for each member of the household is required prior to approval. The findings of the physical examination must verify that all members of the household are free of any physical or emotional health conditions which would adversely affect the welfare of a foster child. A psychological examination may also be required. All members of the household older than twelve (12) years shall receive a Mantoux (TB) skin test for tuberculosis every three (3) years, as long as test results remain negative. Household members with a positive test must provide documentation from a physician every two (2) years certifying that they are free from communicable tuberculosis. Documentation will be via the CFS-478 (Physician's Report).
- Immunization for all children in a foster home (birth/legal children of the foster family and foster children) must be kept up to date.
- Family foster parents must keep the Division informed concerning any changes in their physical or mental health. Annual physical examination documentation by use of the CFS-478 is necessary for foster families.
- Family foster parent(s) shall provide the Division with the health history of each member of the household. This history will include physical and mental health services and treatment received. This requirement can be satisfied by submitting a completed CFS-478 (Physician's Report) at the time a physical is obtained for each person in the household during the time of initial foster home assessment.
- A physical disability in either family foster parent that does not interfere with the ability to give adequate care to a child shall not be a barrier to foster parenthood. The impact of the disability on the individual should be evaluated. This shall include how it affects his personality and whether it may have significance to a specific foster child.
5. **Family Composition:** The family should contain two parents, a mother and a father. Both parents are needed in order to provide maximum opportunities for personality development of foster children. Exceptions will be considered for single parent households on the basis of the applicant's special qualifications to fulfill the needs of a particular foster child. Use of a single parent household is acceptable for those children whose need for a two-parent household is not a crucial aspect of the care required. Single applicants with professional training, such as nurses, may be desirable for special needs children. Other children and

adults (grandparents, aunts, etc.) who are a part of the household shall be assessed on the basis of how they might be affected by the presence of a foster child and also the effect they themselves might have on the foster child. Homes will not be approved if there are transient roomers or boarders.

6. **Marriage Verification and Stability:** Marriages and divorces shall be verified. The pattern of marital stability shall be considered. Family foster parents must have a stable marriage. Not only will the unstable marriage have a negative effect on foster children placed in the home, but the special problems of some foster children could contribute to the break-up of an already unstable marriage. Applicants who have been married fewer than three years will require a "second party review" to be conducted by the Division. A request for a "second party review" shall contain specific information and any necessary clarification in order to assess the stability of marriage and family.

If a family foster parent couple is divorcing, a "second party review" of the family foster home shall be conducted by the Division. A request for a "second party review" shall contain pertinent information for determination of the continued placement of any foster children already placed in the home.

In addition, a "second party review" of the family foster home shall be conducted when an approved single family foster parent marries. A request for a "second party review" shall contain specific information as to the character, suitability, and qualifications of the new spouse to assume the shared role of family foster parent with his/her spouse.

7. **Maximum Capacity of Foster Children:** There will be no more than five (5) children in the home (including the family foster parent's own children and any other children who normally reside in the home of the foster family). No more than three shall be foster children. In no event shall there be more than two children under the age of two. There shall be no more than three children under the age of six placed in the home at one time.

The sole exception to the above limits shall be in those instances in which the placement of a sibling group in a family foster home with no other children in the home would exceed the limits.

In addition, the number of children in a family foster home will be determined by the stamina, capacities, skills of the family foster parents; by the effect upon the equilibrium preferences of the family unit; by physical space available for children; and by the family foster parents' ability to meet the needs of all children present in the home.

The applicants must have legal custody or guardianship of any children (other than foster children) in the home that are not their birth children or relatives. Family foster parents shall not keep children for more than one child-placing agency. Family foster parents will not provide babysitting (day care) service for other children on a regular basis in their home unless they are approved as a Registered Family Home [see Section 6.0, Item #11(a)].

Birth/legal children of the family foster parents shall take part in the family foster home assessment. The extent of their involvement shall be determined by their age and level of maturity. These children must be in agreement to their parents' decision to become family foster parents. Their agreement must be reevaluated annually.

8. **Religion:** Foster children must have the opportunity for religious, spiritual, and ethical development. Family foster parents shall respect the religious preferences of the foster child and his or her birth/legal family. They must be able to present their own religious beliefs to foster children in such a way as to take into consideration the foster child's own religious background. The family foster parents shall never force their own religious beliefs on a foster child whose religious background differs from their own. Family foster parents shall arrange transportation to religious services for a child when necessary.

However, lack of religious affiliation or of a religious faith will not be a barrier to consideration of family foster parent applicants.

9. **Education:** The level of formal education attained by the family foster parent applicants shall be sufficient to allow them to function in their community, in their employment, and in their home.

(Example: Family foster parents should be able to follow physician's instructions, read labels on medication, and administer proper dosages of medication.) The level of their aspirations for children shall be in accord with the particular child's ability. Their awareness of local educational facilities is important to foster children. Family foster parents shall have a positive attitude toward both academic and vocational education and be willing to meet the child's individual needs.

10. **Financial Stability:** The family shall have sufficient, reliable income to assure the family's stability and security, without including the board payment. The foster family shall provide documentation of sufficient financial resources to meet their needs. A copy of this documentation shall be placed in the foster parent's case record. Management of income shall be considered more important than amount of income. The family shall understand that keeping foster children is not a profitable venture.

11. **Employment:** Both parents may be employed outside the home only with certain provisions. We strongly encourage either the husband or the wife to remain at home with a foster child for as long as necessary after placement to provide security and initial adjustment for the foster child. Careful consideration will be made before infants and preschool children are placed in a home where both family foster parents have outside employment. When placing school age children in a home where both parents are employed, the Division shall do so on the basis of careful evaluation of what is best for the individual child. Suitable plans for the care and supervision of foster children before and after school, during school holidays and vacations, and when children are ill and absent from school must be made and approved by the Division. Arrangements for a suitable caretaker must be made ahead of time to prevent last minute arrangements that could result in an inappropriate caretaker.

Single parent households where the sole parent is employed outside the home shall be considered the same as a two-parent household where both parents are employed outside the home. Only school age children shall be placed there.

If employment is seasonal, the family must have compensatory income or savings in the off seasons. Demands made on family foster parents' time by overtime work, revolving shifts, etc., are considered pertinent to their ability to provide adequate care for a foster child.

At no point shall family foster homes also serve as licensed Day Care Family Homes. There shall be no exceptions.

Family foster parents shall not provide day care services on a regular basis, including as a Voluntary Registered Home. Exceptions to this rule will only be considered under the following conditions:

- a. Family foster parents shall not care for more than five children physically in the home; the maximum of five includes any foster or birth children whether in school or not; and the home must be registered, AND
- b. Family foster parents have a secondary caregiver available at a moment's notice. This caregiver would assume responsibility for the care of the day care children in the home in the event they must attend to the needs of a foster child, AND
- c. That alternate caregiver must be listed as such on the Voluntary Registration Application. They must meet the same requirements as the family foster parent who is registered. For example, there must be a Criminal Record and Child Maltreatment Central Registry Check.

12. Criminal Record and Child Maltreatment Central Registry Check:

- a. Family foster parent(s) and all members of the household 10 years of age and older shall consent to the Division making a Child Maltreatment Central Registry Check in all the states in which the applicant has lived in the last six years, and in the person's state of employment, if different. The person must have no history of true abuse and/or neglect. The Division shall repeat the Child Maltreatment Central Registry Check every two (2) years on all persons required to have the check. Also, family foster parents and all members of the household age 14 or older shall consent to the Division making a Criminal Record Check. The Division shall repeat an Arkansas State Police Criminal Record Check every five (5) years on any person required to have the check. This is required under the "Minimum Licensing Standards for Child Welfare Agencies" (PUB-004).
- b. The members of the household shall be free of criminal convictions for offenses which have been declared as rendering an applicant ineligible for application or retention of a license. THESE INCLUDE:

- Murder
- Voluntary manslaughter
- Criminally negligent homicide
- Kidnapping
- Aggravated kidnapping
- Rape
- Aggravated rape
- Public lewdness
- Indecent exposure
- Rape of a child
- Sexual abuse of a child
- Indecency with a child
- Assault
- Aggravated assault

Injury inflicted on a child
Contributing to the delinquency of a minor
Bigamy
Incest
Interference with child custody
Enticing a child
Criminal nonsupport
Sale or purchase of a child
Solicitation of a child
Prostitution
Promotion or prostitution
Aggravated promotion of prostitution
Compelling prostitution
Obscene display or distribution
Obscenity
Sale/distribution/display of harmful material to a minor
Sexual performance by a child

In addition, any criminal conviction involving drugs shall be subject to a "second party review" by the Foster Care Unit, Central Office, prior to approval of the home.

13. **Knowledge of Child Growth and Development:** The family foster parents must have a working knowledge of child growth and development. This must include knowledge of childcare, milestones in development, first aid, and nutrition. Awareness of the emotional needs of children is as important as awareness of the physical needs of children. Children's need for medical care will be met. Corporal punishment is not allowed in a Divisional Family Foster Home. Family foster parents are expected to use time-outs, denial of privileges, and explanation of expectations, etc., as disciplinary measures. The care and development of the child shall be maintained as follows:

a. **Daily Activities**

1. Family foster parent(s) shall provide structure and daily activities designed to promote the individual physical, social, intellectual, spiritual and emotional development of the children in their home.
2. Family foster parent(s) shall cooperate with the Division to help the foster children maintain an awareness of their past, a record of the present, and a plan for the future. Foster parents shall keep a life book for each foster child that includes periodic photographs of the child and a record of the child's memberships, activities, and participation in extracurricular school or church activities.
3. Family foster parent(s) shall ask foster children to assume work responsibilities reasonable for their age and ability and commensurate with those expected of their own children.

b. **Clothing and Personal Belongings**

1. Family foster parent(s) shall, with the assistance of the Division, provide each foster child with his/her own clean, well-fitting, attractive, seasonal clothing appropriate to age, sex, individual needs, and comparable to the community standards.

2. Family foster parent(s) shall include the foster children in the selection of their own clothing whenever possible and appropriate.
3. Family foster parent(s) shall allow foster children to bring their personal belongings to the family foster home and acquire additional belongings.
4. Family foster parent(s) shall send all personal clothing and belongings with the children when they leave the family foster home.

c. Discipline and Control

1. Family foster parent(s) shall train and discipline children with kindness and understanding.
2. Family foster parent(s) shall establish well defined rules which set the expectations and limits of behavior that are relevant to the child's level of growth and development, which are applied in a consistent manner.
3. Family foster parent(s) shall teach and train each child with techniques that stress praise and encouragement; discipline should be positive rather than negative.
4. Family foster parent(s) shall not subject children to verbal abuse, derogatory remarks about themselves or family members or threats of removal from the family foster home.
5. Methods of discipline that are unacceptable for use by family foster parents with foster children include but are not limited to:
 - a. Cruel, severe, or humiliating actions, such as washing mouth with soap, taping or obstructing child's mouth, placing painful or unpleasant tasting substances in mouth, on lips, etc.; placing child in dark areas; any kind of humiliation in public;
 - b. Physical punishment inflicted in any manner, such as hitting, pinching, pulling hair, slapping, kicking, twisting arm, forced fixed body positions, etc.;
 - c. Denial of meals, clothing, shelter, withholding implementation of the case plan, or any denial of basic rights;
 - d. Denial of visits, telephone, or mail contacts with family members;
 - e. Assignment of extremely strenuous exercise or work;
 - f. Locked isolation of any kind; and
 - g. Punishment of any kind for poor toilet habits.

d. Health Care

1. Family foster parent(s) shall cooperate with the Division in medical and dental care planning for the foster child.

2. Family foster parent(s) shall make medical and dental appointments as needed. Family foster parents should accompany the child to the initial health screening and any on-going health or mental health services provided. If this is not possible, the family foster parent shall be available by telephone to the person conducting the screening. The family foster parent shall consult with the health care provider about the child's health care needs.
3. Family foster parents with whom the child is placed should be involved in the comprehensive health assessment of the child.
4. Family foster parent(s) shall report any corrective or follow-up medical or dental care the child needs to the Division.
5. Foster families shall have their own transportation available. Area Managers may grant a waiver in situations where kinship families have been recruited specifically for a child. Family foster parent(s) shall be responsible for arranging transportation for foster children to all necessary medical and dental appointments. The Division shall provide assistance as needed.

e. Education

1. Family foster parent(s) shall enroll each school-age child in an accredited school within five school days of the placement of the child.
2. Family foster parent(s) shall cooperate with the Division. They shall take part in the selection and arrangement for educational programs appropriate for the child's age, abilities, and case plan.
3. Foster parents shall attend school conferences concerning a foster child and plan with school personnel when there are school problems. Foster parents shall report serious situations that may require Division involvement to the Division; for example, any situation that may affect the case plan or a situation that puts the child in jeopardy of suspension or expulsion.

f. Religious and Ethnic Heritage

1. Family foster parent(s) shall recognize, encourage, and support the religious beliefs, ethnic heritage, and language of a child and his/her family.
2. Family foster parent(s) shall arrange transportation to religious services or ethnic events for a child whose beliefs and practices are different from their own and who wishes to attend such events.
3. Family foster parent(s) shall not coerce children into participation in religious activities or ethnic events against their will.

14. **Acceptance of Division Regulations:** The family foster parents must abide by the policies of the child placing agency and accept the Division's

supervision. Family foster parents should strive to provide continuous care for the foster child placed in their home until such time as a permanent plan is implemented for the child. In some cases, it may become necessary for an agreement to be reached between the Division and the family foster parents that a placement is not appropriate.

B. Physical Standards for the Home

1. **Accessibility of the Home:** The family foster home shall be accessible throughout the year to fulfill the needs of the foster child. For example, to make available education and religious training, recreation, parental visiting, supervision by the Division and medical care for the child. The accessibility of the home shall be judged in relation to the family foster parents' ability to transport the child for medical care, etc., should that be needed.
2. **Neighborhood:** The neighborhood/community in which the family foster home is located will be one which is accessible. It will provide a healthy environment and be free from health hazards, attractive nuisances (i.e., dangerous objects accessible to children), and threats from persons in and about the neighborhood/community (i.e., incidents of violent crime).
3. **Ownership of Home:** If the foster family does not own the home in which they live, the person who owns the home shall verify that he/she has no objections to the applicant caring for foster children in the home.
4. **General Appearance of the Home:** The home shall be free from physical and health hazards.
5. **Indoor Arrangement and Use of Rooms:** Rooms shall be arranged to allow convenient living. There must be adequate space for privacy, play, and study for all family members. There shall be sufficient seating for the family to eat together. A foster child must sleep in a bedroom. A foster child must not sleep in a living room or dining room or in any room through which one must pass in order to get to another room. Children of the opposite sex shall not share the same bedroom if either child is four (4) years old or older. No children shall share a double bed if either child is four (4) years old or older. No child under age six (6) shall occupy a top bunk. Each child shall be provided with clean bedding, in good condition, that shall be laundered at least weekly, or as needed. Foster children, except infants under age two (2) years, shall not share a sleeping room with adults. No more than four (4) children shall share a bedroom. There shall be 50 square feet of space per child in his/her bedroom. Each bedroom used for foster children shall have a window to the outside.

The number of foster children placed in a family foster home also shall be limited by the number of persons who can satisfactorily live within the physical limits of the home. Individual space shall be provided for the child's personal possessions and a designated space for hanging clothes in or near the bedroom occupied by the child shall be provided for

that child. Space requirements may be waived on a case-by-case basis for Kinship Foster Homes.

6. **Water Supply:** The home shall have a continuous supply of clean drinking water. Water supplied by any source other than a city water department shall be tested yearly by the Arkansas Health Department to assure that it is safe for human consumption. If a water supply is found unsafe, an alternate compliance of the water supply must be agreed upon, put in place, and maintained.
7. **General Safety Standards:** The home shall be free from physical hazards which would endanger the physical safety of children. This shall be verified by inspection of the entire dwelling, the yard surrounding the house, the basement, the attic (if accessible), the garage or carport and storage area. Specific qualities to check for include:
 - a. The home shall be reasonably clean and sanitary.
 - b. The home shall have adequate light, heat, ventilation and plumbing for safe and comfortable living. Bedrooms shall have windows which provide natural light and ventilation.
 - c. The home shall have a minimum of one flush toilet, one wash basin with running water and one bath or shower with hot and cold water.
 - d. Medicines, cleaning supplies, insecticides, gasoline, hazardous tools, knives, guns, etc., shall be stored out of reach of children or kept in locked closets or drawers. Guns must be unloaded and stored in a secure, locked location separate from ammunition. Foster parents shall be aware of possible side effects of all medications and shall administer medications only in accordance with directions on the label. Foster parents shall keep a log of all medications dispensed. All medications shall be stored in a secure location, and psychotropic medications shall be kept securely locked.
 - e. Heating devices such as radiators, fireplaces, wood stoves, gas or electric heaters, and steam and hot water pipes within reach of children shall be screened or otherwise protected.
 - f. The home shall have a safe sewage disposal system. All garbage and other wastes shall be kept in a suitable covered receptacle and disposed of in such a way as not to constitute a health hazard or nuisance.
 - g. The home shall contain at least one approved fire extinguisher, readily accessible and in working condition. Within 10 feet of the kitchen and each bedroom, there shall be fire alarms or smoke detectors maintained in good working order at all times. There also shall be a chemical fire extinguisher in the cooking area.

- h. Fire hazards, such as dangerous or defective heating equipment, flammable materials, defective electrical appliances or electric cords, excessive use of extension cords, etc., shall be eliminated or corrected.
- i. Exterior doors shall not be blocked to prevent easy exit. Neither shall interior doors or halls be blocked or cluttered to prevent easy passage.
- j. The family shall have a plan for taking shelter during a storm.
- k. Emergency phone numbers shall be posted near each telephone, to include at least fire and ambulance (and 911 in areas in which the service is available) and the responsible adult to contact in an emergency.
- l. Yards shall be free of dangerous debris, trash, uncovered cisterns, etc.
- m. Small children shall have access to a play area. Yards shall be large enough to provide simple play space for children. There shall be a fence or barrier to prevent a child's access to a busy street or highway, body of water, or other dangerous area.
- n. Mobile homes used as family foster homes shall be properly installed, tied down and stabilized. If the mobile home is located in a trailer park, there must be sufficient fenced play space for children outside. There must be at least two exits from the mobile home.
- o. Toys shall be safe, in good repair, and shall be age and developmentally appropriate for the children by whom they will be used. Adequate toys will be available for all children in care. Play equipment shall be safe, hazard-free, properly anchored, and shall be age and developmentally appropriate for the children by whom they will be used. All household pets shall have proof of current rabies vaccinations.

8. Fire Safety

- a. Family foster parent(s) living in apartment buildings shall give evidence that the building has been approved for building and fire safety within the last two years.
- b. Family foster parent(s) shall have an evacuation plan and shall share it with each child. They shall conduct fire drills at least quarterly during each year. Family foster parents shall make sure all children understand the procedures at the time they are placed in the home. All drills conducted shall be documented and the documentation placed in the family foster home record. This documentation shall reflect:
 - 1. The date and time of the drill;
 - 2. The persons participating in the drill; and
 - 3. The length of time needed to clear the home.

- c. Family foster homes, including mobile homes, shall have at least two doors which provide unrestricted exits in case of fire.
- d. There shall be a drawn escape plan which shall be posted within the home and outlines the exits in the home.

9. **Telephone**

The family foster home shall have a working telephone.

7.0 **Approval of Family Foster Homes**

A family foster home assessment shall be completed to determine that applicants meet established standards for family foster homes. Also, written notice of approval will be given to that home. Both steps must have been taken before approving the placement of any foster child in that family foster home.

The objective of the family foster home assessment will not be to accumulate data, but to use information obtained in a dynamic way; first, to help evaluate the applicants and, second, to help the applicants make an informed decision about their own suitability to serve as family foster parents.

The family foster home assessment will consist of a minimum of the following steps to assure that the home meets standards:

- A. Physician's statement of health for all family members;
- B. Health Department inspection of the home shall be made, specifically the water supply and sewage disposal system. See also Section 6.0, item B.6., requiring annual testing of the water supply, if it comes from a source other than city water;
- C. Divisional inspection of the house and surroundings, including receiving documentation that the foster parent carries homeowner's or renter's insurance and general liability insurance, which may be included in the homeowners policy;
- D. Personal interviews with, or written responses from references;
- E. A case record which includes documentation of compliance with standards and documentation that the foster parent(s) completed CPR and First Aid training and received certification in both areas prior to approval. The case record shall also include a narrative summary of all pertinent information, and recommendation for approval. Terms of approval; i.e., the number of children for which the home has been approved, their ages and sex and any special needs must be specified. The preferences of the family foster parents will be strictly adhered to by the Division;
- F. A Child Maltreatment Central Registry Check of the family foster parent and any others residing in the home age 10 or over; and
- G. A Criminal Record Check on all persons age 14 and over residing in the home.

8.0 **Denial of a Family Foster Home**

Any applicant who does not meet all standards for approval as a family foster home, or who has received an unfavorable second party review in waiving a

standard contained in this document, shall be denied for placement of foster children. No standard contained in the ''Minimum Licensing Standards for Child Welfare Agencies'' (PUB-004) can be waived without prior approval of the [Child Welfare Agency Review Board](#). Documentation or reasons a home was denied for placement of children shall be made in the case record, and the applicant shall be informed in writing of the reason for denial.

9.0 **Appropriate Selection and Placement**

Applicants who meet standards established for family foster homes shall be selected for placement of foster children when the child's individual needs can be met by that family. [An individualized training plan shall be developed for the foster parent\(s\) taking into consideration the age and characteristics of children for whom the foster parent\(s\) has expressed preferences.](#) It shall be recognized that each family has special qualifications and limitations. There shall be a written agreement documented by forms CFS-462 and CFS-462A, provided for that purpose, between the child-placing agency and the applicant. The agreement shall state that only foster children who can benefit from the individual family environment will be placed in that particular home.

The written agreement shall be signed upon approval during the home study process and shall include:

- Expectations and responsibilities of the Division, the staff and the family foster parent(s);
- Services to be provided;
- Financial arrangements for the children placed in the home;
- Authority the family foster parent(s) can exercise for the children placed in their home;
- Actions that require Divisional staff authorization;
- Legal responsibility for damage or risk resulting from children in their homes;
- The Division's process and procedures for investigating complaints; and
- The Division's procedure for giving advance notice of termination of a placement except for documented emergencies. (See the County Office Contact Persons Form placed at the end of this publication.)

10.0 **Reevaluation of a Family Foster Home**

The Family Service Worker will monitor the foster family home at least quarterly for continued compliance with the standards of approval for foster homes. The Family Service Worker shall formally complete a Checklist for Compliance (CFS-475) on the foster family every three months and will file the completed form in the family foster home record. The Family Service Worker or agency designee will formally complete Section F (On-going Monitoring) of the CFS-475. Family foster homes must be reviewed annually; i.e., no later than the anniversary month of the family foster home's approval, to assure that they continue to meet all standards and policy requirements. [The foster home record must document that the foster parent\(s\) maintained current certification in both CPR and First Aid.](#) Any family foster home that does not continue to meet standards will be closed for placement of foster children.

Other than annual reevaluations, family foster homes also shall be reevaluated if any of the following conditions develop:

- A. Death or serious illness among the members of the foster family;
- B. Separation or divorce of family foster parents;
- C. Loss of or change in employment status by either family foster parent;
- D. Change in residence;
- E. Suspected maltreatment of any child in the home; or

F. Any other major life changes in the family foster home.

11.0 Responsibilities of the Division

- A. The Division shall be responsible for selecting a family foster home specifically trained and suited to the foster child's special needs. The Division also shall be responsible for the proper implementation of a permanent plan for that child.
- B. The Division shall supervise all foster child placements. Children in foster care will be visited regularly and such visits will take place no less than weekly. The Family Service Worker shall make periodic visits in the foster home. A portion of this visitation shall be set aside for separate and private conversation between the Family Service Worker and the child to assess the quality of care being provided.
- C. The Division shall evaluate the specific strengths, needs, preferences and experience of each family foster home. This shall be used to determine the number, ages, sex and characteristics of children who will be placed in the home. These determinations shall consider the family foster parents' own family life. No child may be placed in a family foster home in violation of the limitations established in this assessment or the family foster parents' preferences.
- D. The Division shall make training available to the family foster parents. Training will be at times and locations that will enable the family foster parents to meet their training requirements. Assistance to the family foster parents with reimbursement for transportation and childcare shall be provided by the Division, as needed.
- E. The Division shall provide support services, such as emergency, respite care, day care, transportation, crisis and after-hours intervention, counseling, and family foster parent mentors for the family foster parents. These services shall be available, as needed, to assist in providing proper care or to prevent the disruption of a child's placement.
- F. The Division shall not place children with any family foster parents who have not satisfactorily completed the required 30 hours of pre-service training or who have not satisfied the in-service training requirements of 15 hours annually, for each foster parent, after the first year. The Division can make an exception for any foster parent whose annual in-service training hours are more than 60 calendar days overdue.
- G. The Division shall keep a record for each child that includes legal documents (e.g., birth certificate, social security card, court orders). The Division delegates the responsibility for the day-to-day care of the foster child to the family foster parents. Family foster parents shall be provided with the following information for every foster child placed in their home:
 - 1. Full and complete information about the child, except as prohibited by law;
 - 2. Health care information regarding the child, including;
 - a. The child's Medical Passport and any revisions, as on-going medical or mental health care information regarding the child becomes available;

- b. The child's [Client Medical, and Psychological Information \(CFS-6012\)](#) completed within seven days of the Comprehensive Health Assessment and provided to family foster parents within five days of completion or revision; and
 - c. The Child's Health Plan (CFS-369) completed within fourteen days of completion of the Comprehensive Health Assessment and provided to family foster parents within five days of completion or revision.
- 3. Reasons for the child's placement and circumstances leading to removal from the home;
- 4. Probable length of placement;
- 5. A copy of the child's case plan and visitation plan from the Case Plan ([CFS-6010](#)) and any revisions to either within five days of completion;
- 6. Other information pertinent to the provision of services to the child, as the individual situation warrants;
- 7. CFS-462 (Initial Family Foster Home Agreement); and
- 8. CFS-462A (Family Foster Home Agreement Addendum),
- H. The family foster parents shall be notified of all staffings and judicial reviews for foster children placed in their home. Family foster parents shall be provided the opportunity to have input in shaping the case plan. Family foster parents shall have their roles and the roles of the child's Family Service Worker clearly defined with regard to carrying out each of the specific tasks of the child's case plan. The family foster parent role delegates responsibility for the day-to-day care of the foster child to the family foster parents. However, DCFS retains legal responsibility for supervision, decision making, and assuring continuity of care for the child.
- I. The Division shall notify [immediately](#) the child's family, the OCC Attorney, [Child Abuse Hotline](#) and the [Attorney ad litem](#) if the child is the subject of an allegation of child maltreatment. If the alleged child maltreatment occurred in the foster home, the [Attorneys ad litem](#) for all children placed in the home shall be notified.
- J. The Division shall continually monitor the appropriateness of the placement.

12.0 Responsibilities of the Family Foster Parents

- A. Family foster parents shall comply with the objectives of the family foster home program by providing care and supervision in a family environment for every foster child placed in their home by the Division. This care and supervision shall include experiences associated with normal family life and an opportunity for the child to develop to his or her full potential emotionally and physically.
- B. Family foster parents shall recognize that foster care is a temporary arraignment until a permanent plan can be established and implemented. Family foster parents shall cooperate with the Division by respecting the rights of the foster child's birth/legal parents, participating in training offered by the Division, accepting the Division's supervision of

any child placed in their home, and participating in periodic reevaluations of the home. The family foster parents shall cooperate with the Division by recognizing that the Division sees foster care as a temporary but integral step in arriving at a permanent plan for the child. They shall agree to allow parental and sibling visitation, as scheduled by the Division. Family foster parents shall agree to provide a home for the foster child as long as that placement is appropriate for the child.

- C. Family foster parents shall provide continuous care for any foster child placed in their home until the permanent plan can be implemented, unless there is agreement between the Division and the family foster parents that the placement is not appropriate.
- D. Family foster parents shall agree to participate in pre-service and in-service training programs for family foster parents, as specified by policy.
- E. Family foster parents shall provide direct care and have decision making authority concerning the foster child's daily living. However, they cannot make independent major decisions that have far-reaching effects on the foster child's life, such as consents for surgery, military service or marriage. They should not make decisions that have far reaching effects for the child's personal appearance without consulting the Family Service Worker, i.e., haircuts.
- F. Family foster parents shall provide reasonable opportunities for mail/phone contact and visits with parents/legal guardians and with siblings.
- G. Family foster parent(s) shall notify the Division immediately of serious illness, accidents, or any unusual circumstances affecting the health, safety, physical or emotional well-being of the foster child.
- H. Family foster parents shall share the primary responsibility of helping foster children who are age appropriate to develop independent living skills along with the child's assigned Family Service Worker.
- I. Family foster parent(s) shall sign an agreement with the Division to provide foster care (Initial foster Home Agreement [CFS-462]) and a separate agreement for each foster child placed in the home (Foster Home Agreement Addendum [CFS-462A]).
- J. The family foster parents shall respect the rights retained by the birth/legal parents and the Division.
- K. Family foster parents shall maintain absolute confidentiality of private information about the foster child and his/her birth/legal family. It is understood that the foster family interacts with others. Nevertheless, information about the child's history, or information which the child wishes to keep private must not be discussed with others. Policies, activities and programs of the Department of Human Services are discussed publicly in generalizations only. Identification of particular cases or children must not be made without prior approval.
- L. Family foster parents shall make every effort to give the Division advance notice if it becomes necessary to request removal of a foster child placed in their home. If at all possible, they should give at least two weeks notice to the Division.

- M. Family foster parent(s) shall maintain records in accordance with Division procedures and forms for the children placed with the family. This includes both health and progress records.

13.0 **Family Foster Parent Liability**

- A. Foster parents must carry homeowner's or renter's insurance and general liability insurance, which may be included in the homeowner's policy; Any claims for damages or destruction to family foster parent(s)' personal property that is not covered by home owner's insurance or to the property of others due to the actions of a foster child placed in a foster home will need to be filed with the Arkansas Claims commission. Family foster parent(s) or the individual can request the appropriate application to submit a claim by contacting the Arkansas Claims commission, State Capitol Building, Room 061, Little Rock, Arkansas 72205, telephone 682-1619.
- B. Prior to filing a claim with the Claims Commission, the family foster parent(s) or the individual will need to contact the local Division of Children and Family Services county office to provide information needed to complete an incident report. This incident report will be submitted to Central Office by county staff and will be used to assist the Claims Commission in processing the claim.
- C. Also, according to Act 941 of 1989: "Family foster parents approved by a child welfare agency licensed by the Department of Human Services shall not be liable for damages caused by their foster children, nor shall they be liable to the foster children nor to their parents or guardians of the foster children for injuries to the foster children caused by acts or omissions of the family foster parents unless the acts or omissions constitute malicious, willful, wanton or grossly negligent conduct."